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SUBJECT: ANNUAL OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (OSAC) CRIME AND  
SAFETY REPORT FOR 2008

REF: 08 STATE 132056

1. The following is US Consulate Dubai's OSAC Crime and Safety  
Report for 2008:

12. Overall Crime and Safety Situation:

The actual crime rate in Dubai is difficult to determine due to lack of transparency on the part of host government with regards to crime statistics and related information. Dubai continues to be rated at a Medium threat level for crime. RSO believes the crime rate is generally comparable to or less than that found in most cities of similar size around the globe. Justification for the Medium rating is derived largely from open source reporting and incidental reporting from Dubai RSO official contacts, OSAC constituents, staff and other members of the community. RSO Dubai believes that the majority of crime is centered in high concentrations of low income temporary laborers originating from India, Pakistan, the Philippines and other nations. These laborers or customer service specialists comprise the majority of inhabitants and account for over 80 percent of the population by some accounts. The majority of crimes attributable to this group consist of petty thefts, and increasingly, reported incidents of sexual harassment (committed primarily by males).

Host government takes pains to nurture an image of safety and security. The resulting feeling of relative safety may cause western expatriates to take fewer precautions than they might in their cities of origin. This in turn may lead to increased incidences of crimes of opportunity arising from vehicles, homes, or offices left unsecured.

In this reporting period there has been a measurable increase of highly publicized white-collar crimes involving debit and credit card fraud. This seems to be the work of organized crime syndicates following the money trail leading to Dubai. Additionally, there have been scattered uncorroborated reports of counterfeit local currency (AED).

Violent criminal acts remain a rare occurrence in Dubai and are typically centered in the expatriat community described above. All criminal actions in this portion of the population resulting in apprehensions are dealt with swiftly and harshly by host government. Typically, expatriats are deported following incarceration.

RSO Dubai views the greatest daily threat to be that of vehicular accidents. Traffic accidents are frequent and common. Serious collisions resulting in fatalities are increasingly publicized in local media. One notable "pile-up" involving over 100 vehicles occurred on a major artery between Abu Dhabi and Dubai and resulted in over forty fatalities. Excessive speed, poor driving habits and occasionally diminished visibility due to heavy fog are the usual cause of the more serious accidents. Adding to this is a policy of low-profile policing which uses cameras versus police stops for even the most erratic or dangerous drivers.

13. Political Violence:

There have been no instances of political violence in the past year. Political demonstrations are rare and must be legally permitted by host government authorities. However, there have

been a few instances of both legal and illegal (no permit issued) peaceful demonstrations in Dubai and neighboring Emirates, which are attributable to the ongoing conflict in Gaza (beginning in late December 2008). The continuing possibility of a terrorist attack against U.S. interests cannot be ruled out given the UAE's proximity to countries of concern, its importance as a major transit hub for regional travel, and the large expatriate population resident in the country. Continued threats from al-Qa'ida and similar terrorist groups directed against U.S. interests worldwide require that Americans residing or visiting in the region remain alert to security concerns, including official and unofficial Americans residing in or visiting the UAE. Americans should maintain a low profile and vary routes, times and routines while in the UAE. As a general security practice, Americans should keep their vehicles locked at all times. When vehicles are left unattended, owners are advised to conduct a thorough exterior and interior inspection prior to entering a vehicle. The RSO recommends a clean interior car policy; thefts are less likely when there are no personal belongings visible.

#### 14. Post-Specific Concerns:

Tensions within the greater Middle East remain and have the potential to affect security in the UAE. With a large expatriate population (well over a one million Indian nationals and close to one million Pakistanis) there is at least the theoretical possibility of reaction to events in these expatriates' home countries. However, the South Asian community in the UAE has been generally docile, law-abiding, and disinclined to do anything that would risk arrest, deportation, and loss of employment. The UAE continues to advance its national drug strategy, including Dubai's zero-tolerance approach that has seen the arrest and trial of many USCs for carrying minute quantities of banned substances, usually followed by a prison sentence of several years. The UAE continues to intensify security at airports, land routes, seaports and coastline patrols. A barrier along the Omani border was constructed in an effort to stop or slow the flow of illegal drugs into the UAE.

#### 15. Police Response:

The Dubai emergency response system 999 is for police, medical emergencies and fire emergencies. English-speaking operators are usually available. When seeking emergency assistance, callers should provide the operator/dispatcher with a detailed description of the location and the type of emergency. Many streets in Dubai are identified by a number and letter combination (Ex.: 13 D). A recent initiative to change to street names rather than street number systems has added to confusion when giving directions. This problem is further aggravated by vast ever-changing construction zones as Dubai builds and updates its infrastructure. Identifying landmarks or businesses near the residence or location is essential in helping emergency personnel respond.

Police arriving in response to a report of a crime may not always provide the same level of service as in the United States. Most police officers below the rank of Warrant Officer are from the expatriate community and are hesitant to make independent decisions. These officers wear green uniforms and have limited education. Those above the rank of Warrant Officer are Emirati and many have studied in Europe or the U.S. These officers wear tan/khaki uniforms. In matters of life and death, police cannot be relied upon to risk injury or death to intercede in a possible life-threatening situation. Decisions concerning anything other than routine matters will be delegated to an Emirati police supervisor. English fluency is rare for expatriate officers and English speakers are generally assigned to the Criminal Investigation Division. When dialing the police department it is advisable for a non-Arabic speaker to speak to an English-speaking officer. Dubai Police HQ and Emergency dispatch do have a variety of language capabilities to reflect the significant population of the expatriate community. Should an American Citizen dial 911 during an emergency, the call will still be connected to Dubai Police and Emergency services. Many international emergency phone numbers have been captured and added to Dubai's emergency call-in network with the understanding that in an emergency people tend to rely on "old" habits.

Investigative resources and sophisticated equipment are available to assist investigators. The police use fingerprint and iris scan technology, creating a national registry for expatriates living and working in the UAE. Local police will only conduct name and record checks if the individual presents himself/herself at the police station and has fingerprints taken. Police will not provide data with only name and date of birth. This investigative process is now applicable throughout the UAE. Americans detained or arrested are advised to notify the Mission's Consular section; please see below for the Consular phone numbers.

#### 16. Medical Emergencies:

For treatment of major life-threatening emergencies such as heart attack, stroke, major trauma (road accidents) or serious bleeding go to the Rashid Hospital Emergency and Trauma Center (04 337-4000) on Oud Metha Rd. By law, all motor vehicle accident victims are to be taken to Rashid Hospital.

For pediatric and OB/GYN non-traumatic medical emergencies, go to the Al Wasl Hospital (324-1111) on Oud Metha Rd. or American Hospital (336-7777) located opposite Movenpick Hotel. The patient's OB/GYN should also be contacted.

Call 999 if you need ambulance transport. Ambulances are modern (most produced in the U.S.), manned by trained paramedics and equipped with life-saving equipment and will transport you to the hospital you request or to Rashid Hospital Emergency and Trauma Center if you are in a motor vehicle accident. Due to lack of street addresses and construction in Dubai, directions need to be given to your location based upon prominent landmarks (directions to your home should be prepared and kept by the telephone). Do not end an emergency telephone call until you are certain that the directions are clearly understood. If the residence is difficult to find, advise the 999 operator that you will meet the ambulance at a nearby landmark, if possible. Heavy traffic may also impede the ability of emergency medical services to respond in a timely manner. Use of a personally owned vehicle for transport to a hospital should be a consideration. Therefore, it is important to familiarize oneself with the quickest routes to emergency facilities throughout the city.

For non-life threatening emergencies or routine consultations, there are several private medical centers and medical providers available. It is strongly advised that all personnel identify and select a primary care physician and a pediatrician if required. Making this selection will enable staff members to be established and comfortable with doctor before a true emergency arises.

#### 17. Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim:

As previously stated, the crime rate in Dubai is lower than or comparable to other major metropolitan areas in the world. Street crimes such as pick-pocketing and petty theft do occur, although weapons are rarely used. It is important not to be lulled into a false sense of security. While Dubai may in many ways be western in its outlook, the local culture is conservative and Americans should be careful not to offend local (Islamic) sensibilities. Dress should be conservative and women should avoid wearing shorts, short skirts, and sleeveless attire. These rules for dress should be observed in tourist areas as well in the city. Harassment of western females does occasionally occur. Victims of harassment are encouraged to report such incidents to the U.S. Consulate in Dubai. Teenage and adult females should keep dress standards in mind when walking outdoors, especially in the city. It is advisable for women to travel in groups or pairs, particularly in hours of darkness. Public displays of affection are discouraged and could be considered a violation of local laws. Practicing good security measures can reduce the risk of becoming a victim. Please note the following:

- Vary routes and times
- Vary routines and places of activities
- Carry your cell phone and keep it where it is available. Do not use the phone while driving
- Know where the nearest police station is

- Have numbers pre-programmed such as the emergency numbers previously mentioned
- Always keep your vehicle windows closed and doors locked. Do not leave valuables in plain view
- Control the keys to your residence. If you give your key to domestic staff, maintain control of the key for the secondary lock
- If you can, always let someone know when you are out, where you will be and where you can be reached
- Leave lights on when away from home and be sure to lock your doors and windows
- Discourage children from answering the door or gate bell. Do not open the door or gate until you have unidentified the visitor. Domestic staff and dependents should be instructed to do the same and to report any unusual activity that has occurred in your absence
- If you will be away from home for any length of time, have a friend check on your home - Women should travel in groups, if traveling in remote areas, especially after dark
- Inspect your home periodically to identify vulnerabilities or inoperative security features
- Women should travel in pairs or groups particularly in hours of darkness
- If someone approaches you claiming to be a police officer, ask for identification and be vigilant
- If you feel as though you are being followed, do not drive home; go to a safe area such as a police station or public area such as a shopping mall. Make noise and draw attention to yourself to ward off a suspicious person(s). Try to get a license plate number as well as description of the vehicle. When out, take note where you might go if you are followed or what you might do if cornered or confronted. Playing the "what if" game could save your life and will give you something to do while sitting in traffic.
- Use caution when riding in taxicabs. Do not sit in the front seat and do not engage in idle conversation. (Being too friendly with a taxi driver may cause him to misunderstand your intentions.) Tell the driver where you want to go and leave the conversation at that. Dubai law requires the taxicab to use the meter. If the driver refuses, do not get into the taxi or get out if already inside. If there are any incidents, taxicabs have the driver's name and number posted on the back of the driver or passenger seat. Please note that the color of the taxicab's roof indicate a specific company. Most cabs in Dubai are tan except for the roofs which can vary from red, blue, green, yellow and pink (Female drivers only, in respect of female passengers.) Obtain the information and call the police and report the incident.

#### 18. For Further Information:

The American Consulate in Dubai is located on the 20th and 21st Floor of the Dubai World Trade Center on Sheikh Zayed Road, in Dubai. The main Consulate phone number is 971-4-311-6000. As Dubai does not have a Marine Security Detachment, the number to the Marine Security Guard located (Post 1) in Abu Dhabi is 971-2-414-2500. The Consulate is open for business Sunday - Thursday from 0830 to 1700. The Consulate is closed on UAE and U.S. holidays.

As the U.S. Department of State continues to develop information on any potential security threats to American overseas, it shares credible threat information through travel warnings and public announcements, available on the internet at [HYPERLINK "http://www.travel.state.gov"](http://www.travel.state.gov)

In addition to information on the internet, travelers can hear recorded information by calling the Department of State in Washington, D.C. at 202-647-5225 from their touch tone phone. The U.S. Consulate also sends updated information regarding security threats via the Warden system to registered Americans within its consular district. RSO encourages American visitors to register with the U.S. Consulate Consular Section at [HYPERLINK "https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs"](https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs)

Please note additional information for the Consulate Consular section:

For Consular/American Citizen Services: 971-4-311-6213 (1230 to 1500, Sunday - Thursday).  
For Non-Immigrant Visa questions: 971-4-311-6000 (Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 1500-1600; also Mondays 1000-1600). The U.S. Consulate General in Dubai recommends correspondence by e-mail at [dubaivisaenquiry@state.gov](mailto:dubaivisaenquiry@state.gov).  
UAE Country Councils operate both in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. For more information, contact the Regional Security Office (971-4-311-6000) or OSAC's Washington office.

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